

~~TOP SECRET~~DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON*noted by Jace
9-16-62*

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

12 SEP 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR The Chairman, President's Foreign Intelligence
Advisory Board

SUBJECT: National Reconnaissance Program Status

Attached are copies of two reports summarizing the status of the National Reconnaissance Program since the last report to the Board given on 7 December 1962.

The first nine months of 1963 have been significant ones for the National Reconnaissance Program. We have had our problems, and we have passed some important milestones.

In the satellite program most of the difficult engineering or development hurdles which had been the cause of concern were passed without difficulty. It turned out to be the "tried and true" AGENA vehicle that tripped us up. A rash of failures in the AGENA during the first six months of 1963 forced us to slow down the program while we assured ourselves where the problem lay and took corrective action to improve AGENA reliability, actions which touched upon the Lockheed management, and upon engineering methods and check-out procedures. These actions have caused delays to the program and delayed the acquisition of intelligence.

I feel that we are about out of the woods on the AGENA problems, and cite as evidence our record since May. Nevertheless, we still do not have the AGENA reliability up to the point that we would like. We continue to suffer from minor difficulties that, although they have not resulted in a mission failure, have affected the quantity or quality of the "take". We are aggressively directing our efforts toward further improvement, but wringing out the last small problems or marginal components can be a wearisome exercise.

On the brighter side, we have increased markedly our capability by the successful development of an improved booster and three new payload systems.

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The improved THOR booster, the basic THOR with three 50,000-pound thrust solid rocket motors strapped on, has had eight launches with all except the first being complete successes. The GAMBIT system with its two to three foot ground resolution capability has had two successful missions. The LANYARD system, designed for five foot ground resolution, has had one successful mission. Finally, the J system, which gives the CORONA MURAL a double load of film and a dual recovery capability has had one successful launch and first recovery. Although the second load was not recovered, this appears today to be a failure not connected with the dual mode of operation.

In the OXCART program we experienced foreign object damage problems this spring that required at various times the removal of 20 J-58 engines and extensive aircraft nacelle modifications. This noticeably slowed progress between 5 April and 17 May 1963. Corrective measures have been taken; although minor instances of foreign object damage have occurred since May, no further engine removals have been necessary. Aircraft 123 crashed on 23 May after having completed 79 flights. The cause was determined to be ice in the pitot system, causing loss of basic reference instruments. Corrective actions to preclude recurrence have included (1) installation of a new pitot/static tube which provides total pitot head deicing and (2) installation of a new angle of attack indicator to reduce pilot disorientation.

To date the A-12 aircraft has achieved a maximum speed of M-3.06, has flown up to 75,150 feet and has had one flight lasting 3:06 hours.

All in all I feel that the program has progressed satisfactorily and that the National Reconnaissance posture is considerably better this fall than it was last winter when all the new developments were as yet untested.

Brockway McMillan

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Director

National Reconnaissance Office

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1. NRP Status (Satellite)
2. NRP Status (Aircraft)

OXCART IDEALIST

TAGBOARD

CORONA LANYARD GAMBIT

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